

Elite Opponents

Griffons

By Andy Collins



This column aims to provide DMs with interesting opponents to pit against the PCs in their campaigns. Building off of a simple base -- typically a standard monster from the *Monster Manual* -- each column uses the building blocks provided in the rulebooks to craft a variety of foes. Through the addition of class levels or templates, or even via simple HD advancement, the creatures presented in this column are transformed from run-of-the-mill opponents into memorable foes. Check out this column every month for formidable enemies built from a different monster!

The Griffon: Paragon of Majestic Power

This month, our base creature is the griffin, an aggressive magical beast that combines the physical traits of lions and eagles. Because these ferocious hunters favor horseflesh for meals, they are the bane of low-level adventurers who rely on their mounts. Like many other predators, however, griffons hunt all manner of prey.

Griffons make fine mounts for those willing to spend the time and money needed to train them. In addition, they are intelligent enough to serve as cohorts, and their unique features make them quite valuable in that capacity as well.



This column presents five different griffin variants, ranging from CR 5 to CR 9. The description of each griffin offers basic information on using it as a mount, including rules for selecting it as a paladin's special mount, if applicable. These griffons can be further adjusted by adding HD or templates, if desired.

Celestial Griffon

Celestial griffons behave much like their terrestrial cousins do. Although they are dedicated to the cause of good, they demonstrate the same aggressive, territorial behavior as ordinary griffons do. The celestial griffin has been known to ally with powerful servants of good, such as elf fighters or (in rare cases) paladins. At the DM's discretion, a 10th-level paladin can select a celestial griffin as a special mount. A celestial griffin can also be summoned with the *summon monster V* spell.

Celestial griffons typically have a silvery tinge to their wings and a proud, arrogant tilt to their heads.

Celestial Griffon: CR 5; Large magical beast (extraplanar); HD 7d10+21; hp 59; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +7; Grp +15; Atk +11 melee (2d6+4, bite); Full Atk +11 melee (2d6+4, bite) and +8 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA pounce, rake 1d6+2, smite evil; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, resistances (acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5), scent, spell resistance 12; AL CG; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Hide -2, Jump +8, Listen +6, Spot +10; Iron Will, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite).

Pounce (Ex): If a celestial griffon dives upon or charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +8 melee, damage 1d6+2.

Smite Evil (Su): Once per day, a celestial griffon can make a normal melee attack to deal 7 points of extra damage against an evil foe.

Fiendish Griffon

Evil to the core, the fiendish griffon is a vicious and rapacious predator that displays uncommon savagery in battle. Fiendish griffons often find service with evil warlords or blackguards.

At the DM's discretion, a blackguard can gain a fiendish griffon for his fiendish servant. Treat the blackguard's character level as 5 lower than normal for the purpose of determining the servant's special abilities. Like celestial griffons, fiendish griffons can be summoned with the *summon monster V* spell. A caster wishing to summon fiendish griffons, however, must give up another monster from the summoning list. The most logical choice is fiendish dire wolverine.

Fiendish griffons often display streaks of red or black in their wings.

Fiendish Griffon: CR 5; Large magical beast (extraplanar); HD 7d10+21; hp 59; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +7; Grp +15; Atk +11 melee (2d6+4, bite); Full Atk +11 melee (2d6+4, bite) and +8 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA pounce, rake 1d6+2, smite good; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Hide -2, Jump +8, Listen +6, Spot +10; Iron Will, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite).

Pounce (Ex): If a fiendish griffon dives upon or charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +8 melee, damage 1d6+2.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, a fiendish griffon can make a normal melee attack to deal 7 points of extra damage against a good foe.

Half-Bronze Dragon/Half-Griffon

Bronze dragons and griffons have similar terrain entries, and they often share the same territory -- though not always on a friendly basis. Typically, griffons aren't tough enough to chase off a nesting dragon, so they grudgingly accept the great reptile's presence. Similarly, bronze dragons are typically willing to leave nearby griffon nests alone, since raiding them is more risky than it's worth. In rare cases, when a nesting griffon has been killed or captured by hunters, a nearby bronze dragon cares for its abandoned eggs and raises the young to adulthood. A griffon raised by a bronze dragon might even come to believe it is a dragon, and interbreeding between the two kinds of creatures seems entirely possible.

A half-bronze-dragon/half-griffon makes a fine cohort for a good-aligned character -- particularly with the Dragon Cohort feat from the *Draconomicon*. Such a creature can also serve as a 12th-level paladin's special mount, using the Dragon Steed feat from that book (see page 139 in the *Draconomicon* for more details on dragons as special mounts).

Half-Bronze-Dragon/Half-Griffon: CR 6; Large dragon; HD 7d12+28; hp 73; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 21, touch 11, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +7; Grp +19; Atk +14 melee (1d6+8, claw); Full Atk +14 melee (1d6+8, 2 claws) and +13 melee (2d6+4, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA breath weapon (60-ft. line of lightning), pounce, rake 1d6+4; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunities (electricity, paralysis, sleep), low-light vision, scent; AL LG; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 26, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 7, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +3, Jump +22, Listen +11, Spot +15; Iron Will, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite).

Breath Weapon (Su): Once per day, the half-bronze-dragon/half-griffon can breathe a 60-foot line of lightning. Every creature in the area takes 6d8 points of electricity damage (Reflex DC 17 half).

Pounce (Ex): If a half-bronze-dragon/half-griffon dives upon or charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +12 melee, damage 1d6+4.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a half-bronze-dragon/half-griffon is up to 620 pounds; a medium load, 621-1,840 pounds; and a heavy load, 1,841-2,760 pounds.

Warbeast Griffon

Though griffons typically resist domestication, a war-trained griffon can be a truly formidable mount. The warbeast template (from *Monster Manual II*) can be used to create just such a creature. (Normally, the warbeast template can't be applied to magical beasts. The griffon, however, seems like a reasonable exception to this rule, since it has many animal characteristics. At the DM's discretion, a 10th-level paladin

can select a warbeast griffon as a special mount.

Warbeast Griffon: CR 5; Large magical beast; HD 8d10+32; hp 76; Init +2; Spd 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (average); AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +8; Grp +17; Atk +13 melee (2d6+5, bite); Full Atk +13 melee (2d6+5, bite) and +10 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA pounce, rake 1d6+2; SQ combative mount, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 5, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Hide -2, Jump +9, Listen +8, Spot +13; Iron Will, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bite).

Pounce (Ex): If a warbeast griffon dives upon or charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +10 melee, damage 1d6+2.

Combative Mount (Ex): A rider on a warbeast griffon gets a +2 circumstance bonus on all Ride checks. A warbeast griffon is proficient with light, medium, and heavy armor.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a warbeast griffon is up to 460 pounds; a medium load, 461-920 pounds; and a heavy load, 921-1,380 pounds.

Huge Warbeast Griffon

The Huge warbeast griffon is usually tamed and ridden by hill and stone giants. It is much too powerful to serve as a special mount or cohort.

Huge Warbeast Griffon: CR 9; Huge magical beast; HD 22d10+132; hp 253; Init +1; Spd 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (average); AC 19, touch 9, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +22; Grp +39; Atk +30 melee (4d6+9, bite); Full Atk +30 melee (4d6+9, bite) and +27 melee (1d8+4, 2 claws); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA pounce, rake 1d6+4; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +19, Ref +14, Will +11; Str 29, Dex 13, Con 23, Int 5, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Hide -7, Jump +17, Listen +4, Spot +27; Flyby Attack, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Improved Natural Attack (claw), Iron Will, Multiattack, Snatch, Weapon Focus (bite).

Pounce (Ex): If a Huge warbeast griffon dives upon or charges a foe, it can make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Attack bonus +27 melee, damage 1d6+4.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for this Huge griffon is up to 2,800 pounds; a medium load, 2,801-5,600 pounds; and a heavy load, 5,601-8,400 pounds.

About the Author

By day, Andy Collins works as a senior designer in the Roleplaying R&D department at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. His credits include the *Player's Handbook* v.3.5, the *Draconomicon*, and the upcoming *Unearthed Arcana*. By night, however, he fights crime as a masked vigilante. Or maybe not.

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